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ABSTRACT

A study examined whether teacher efficacy affects the relationship between the teachers' perceptions of the school principal and the perceived communication conflict strategies teachers use when they disagree with the principal. To test this relationship, 830 questionnaires were distributed to public school teachers in six school districts across Ohio; 306 questionnaires were returned. The teacher efficacy factors--"personal efficacy" and "general efficacy"--and the respective perceptions of the principal--communication openness, perceived credibility, management communication style, and team-building--were canonically correlated with the communication conflict strategies: "nonconfrontation," "solution orientation," and "control." It was found that the teacher efficacy factors and perceptions of the principal were negatively related to nonconfrontation and positively related to solution-orientation conflict message strategies. The most important determinant of the conflict message strategy chosen was the teachers' perceptions of the principal. However, teacher efficacy was an influential factor affecting the female teachers' tendency to use solution orientation strategies. It was found that when teacher efficacy was included in the canonical structure with perceptions of the principal, females were as likely as males to choose a given conflict message strategy, equalizing the difference of response choice between the sexes. (Four pages of references and two tables are included.) (Author/JC)

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The Mediating Influence of Efficacy on Conflict Strategies Used in Educational Organizations

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine whether teacher efficacy affects the relationship between the teachers' perceptions of the principal and the perceived communication conflict strategies teachers use when they disagree with the principal. To test this relationship, surveys were distributed to public school teachers in six school districts across Ohio. Three hundred and six surveys were returned. The teacher efficacy factors -'personal efficacy' and 'general efficacy' - and the respective perceptions of the principal - communication openness, perceived credibility, management communication style, and team-building were canonically correlated with the communication conflict strategies - "nonconfrontation", "solution-orientation", and "control." It was found that the teacher efficacy factors and perceptions of the principal were negatively related to "nonconfrontation" and positively related to "solution-orientation" conflict message strategies. The most important determinant of the conflict message strategy chosen was the teachers' perceptions of the principal. However, teacher efficacy was an influential factor affecting the female teachers' tendency to use 'solution-orientation' strategies. It was found that when teacher efficacy was included in the canonical structure with perceptions of the principal, females were as likely as males to choose a given conflict message strategy, equalizing the difference of response choice between the sexes.

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> "Reflection and the professional growth that accompanies it are the hallmarks of a professional. Teachers' feelings of efficacy and satisfaction are undermined by the absence of opportunities to reflect on their performance, to examine new or alternative practices, or to consider feedback regarding their effectiveness" (McLaughlin, Pfeifer, Swanson-Owens, and Yee, 1986, p. 423).

> "Everyday, administrative decisions undermine teachers' feelings of competence and efficacy...Administrative decisions...can actually create incompetence. The outcome is a 'demoralized teaching force, because it is being asked to do things that are not smart at all" ~ (ibid).

The two statements above reflect the growing concern that to enhance a teacher's level of competence, policymakers and administrators need to be concerned with engaging the teachers in discussions and the decision-making process. When considering Pondy's (1978) definition of effective leadership as the ability to facilitate the shared meaning and mutual understanding necessary to make the enactment of roles meaningful, it follows that administrators and policymakers need to structure actions to facilitate the mutual exchange of information between teachers and significant others in the school's social system. One of these relationships, the teacher-principal relationship, is the focus of this study.

Teachers today are experiencing "structural strain" (Lortie, 1986). They are working within a system that needs to reform its decision-making structure to reduce the ascribed status differences between teachers and administrators. The difference in the educational level between teachers and administrators is becoming smaller. Lortie suggests that the structural strains experienced by teachers "may be emerging in the system of internal governance of school districts" (p. 571). Teachers have direct experience with students and often have more accurate perceptions of the changing needs of students. However, the system of governance may not incorporate the experience and

knowledge of the teachers in matters related to their own classrooms and students. This lack of status and position in the decision-making structure undermines the self-image of the teacher and any "serious efforts to improve teaching in our schools" (p. 571).

The need for teachers to engage in a dialogue with significant others in the school system to gain a sense of efficacy has been addressed by Karl Weick (1976). He has argued that "[i]t is possible that much of the teacher's sense of - and actual - control comes from the fact that diverse interested parties expect the teacher to link their intentions with teaching actions." To link intentions to actions, Weick suggests that "considerable negotiation", characteristic of loosely coupled systems, will foster a sense of efficacy.

While the problem of governance stretches beyond the teacher-principal relationship and, indeed, the principal is constrained by the larger system - the principal still serves as the 'front-line' administrator that can actively engage in dialogue with the teachers. Through active involvement with the teachers in problem-solving situations, the principal can make strides to reduce the status differences and decrease the "structural strain" that reduces teacher efficacy.

Teacher efficacy is defined as the teacher's perceptions that he/she 'makes a difference' and positively affects the learning and development of students (Gibson & Dembo, 1984). Teacher efficacy has been positively related to teacher effectiveness in a number of studies (Armor, et al., 1976; Ashton & Webb, 1986; Berman & McLaughlin, 1977; Brookover, et al., 1978; Brophy & Evertson, 1977; Gibson & Dembo, 1984). The intent of this study is to examine the relationship between teacher efficacy, perceptions of the teacher-principal relationship, and perceived communication conflict message strategies used by teachers when

they disagree with the principal on task-related issues. By describing this relationship a clearer understanding of the constraints affecting the problem-solving process between teachers and principals will be evidenced. We need to understand what factors facilitate or inhibit the construction of "mutual understanding" between the two parties involved.

This research project is the second study by the author designed to describe this relationship. In the first project it was found that perceptions of the principal - specifically, communication openness (CO), perceived source credibility (PC), management communication style (MCS), and team-building (TB) were related to perceived conflict message strategies used by teachers (Grafton & Wilcox, 1987). A positive relationship existed between these factors and "solution-orientation" (SO) strategies (as defined by Putnam and Wilson, 1982) and a negative relationship existed between the factors and "nonconfrontation" (N) strategies. SO strategies were defined as perceived behaviors enacted in which problem solutions are actively approached and conflict is directly dealt with, whereas, N strategies were defined as perceived behaviors enacted in which conflict is avoided or smoothed over.

In addition, the findings indicated that teacher efficacy was related to communication conflict message strategies (Grafton & Wilcox, 1987). Consistent with Bandura's conception of self-efficacy (1977a) advanced in Social Learning Theory, teacher efficacy was positively related to perceived behaviors characteristic of actively approaching a problem (SO) and negatively related to perceived behaviors characteristic of avoiding problems (N).

The question the above research left unanswered was - how does teacher efficacy affect the relationship between the perceptions of the principal and the perceived communication conflict message strategies used by teachers? It is this relationship that will be described in

this study.

Overall, in the first study the results suggested that the higher the teachers' sense of efficacy and the more open, credible, and oriented toward developing a team-orientation the principal, then the more likely the teacher was to use an 'approach' conflict message strategy. By contrast if the teachers had a low sense of efficacy and the principal used a nonparticipative 'tell' conflict messaage strategy, then the teachers would tend to 'avoid' the principal.

The first study also indicated that teacher efficacy seemed to intensify the relationship between the perceptions of the principal and communication conflict message strategies, particularly for female teachers. While it was found that there was a positive relationship between the perceptions of the principal and SO for males, this relationship did not exist for females (Grafton & Wilcox, 1987)[1]. This indicated that if the principal was perceived negatively the teachers would avoid him/her, but we are left wondering what <u>does</u> the female teacher do if she perceives the principal positively. In that teacher efficacy was highly positively related to SO conflict message strategies for the females, teacher efficacy may be an important factor mediating the relationship between the female teachers' perceptions of the principal and the perceived tendency to choose an 'approach' behavior.

Bandura (1977a, 1977b, 1982)) stated that self-efficacy is a cognitive mediating factor reciprocally determined by its relationship to behaviors, perceptions, and the context. Following this assertion, it stands to reason that if Bandura's model is valid in this situation efficacy should affect the relationship between the teachers' perceptions of the principal and communication conflict message strategies. Efficacy should intensify the relationship between the factors. The research cited above indicated that at least in the case

of the female teachers, this explanation may be plausible. To determine if this relationship exists the two factors need to be collapsed and related to the conflict message strategies.

The hypothesized relationships in this study were:

H1: Teacher efficacy and teachers' perceptions of the principal will be positively related to SO conflict message stategies and negatively related to N conflict message strategies.

H2: When teacher efficacy is considered in the model, female teachers will be more likely to use SO conflict message strategies than when only the perceptions of the principal are considered.

If this relationship is not found to be false, then teacher efficacy may be considered a mediating variable between the teachers' perceptions of the principal and conflict message strategies. Teacher efficacy would be a key factor determining the extent to which female teachers, at least, will use SO conflict message strategies.

Why do we need to determine the nature of this relationship? If the relationships exist as hypothesized then the school systems will need to be aware of the need to construct a system to raise the efficacy levels of female teachers to foster constructive problem-solving behaviors that foster 'mutual understanding'.

Constructs Under Investigation

Four constructs were chosen to define the 'quality' of the teacher-principal relationship. Each construct is reflective of, or related to, a participative environment and the perceived communication conflict message strategies (cms) teachers use with principals. In addition, each construct is related to subordinate satisfaction. The constructs which follow are: communication openness, perceived source credibility, management communication style, and team-building.

Communication Openness (CO)

Management theorists have been saying for a long time that openness is necessary for an effective organizational climate (e.g. Likert, 1967; Katz & Kahn, 1966). Openness has been positively correlated with employee satisfaction (Burke & Wilcox, 1969; Baird, 1974; Stull, 1974; Jablin, 1977; Stewart, Gundykunst, & Nishida, 1986). It has also been correlated with the perceived communication conflict strategies used by the teachers with the principal (Grafton & Wilcox, 1987). It was found that if the principal exercised CO the teachers were highly unlikely to use "nonconfrontation" cms and moderately likely to use "solution-orientation" cms.

Hoy and Henderson (1984) and Hoy and Kupersmith (1984) found that perceptions of openness and trust generated by the principal were related to gestalt perceptions affecting the organizational climate in the schools. Astuto and Clark (1985) found that principals in instructionally effective schools were open and responsive, working with teachers for their mutual advantage.

Communication openness was operationally defined as the subjects score on the "Superior-Subordinate Communicative Openness Scale" (SSCO) (Jablin, 1977). This measure assesses subordinate perceptions of the superiors' communication openness. Receptiveness, responsiveness, trust, and reciprocal acceptance (implying respect and recognition) are built into the scale. The 18-item Likert measure has a reported high reliability score (Cronbach's alpha = .96) (ibid).

Perceived Source Credibility (PC)

Redding (1984) stated that a key component of effective managerial communication is source credibility. He stated that the credibility of a source exerts a "commanding force on our judgment" (p. 77) and is so closely interrelated with trust it is "almost an interchangable term"

(p. 75). Ouchi (1981) also affirmed the necessity for management to be perceived as candid, honest, open, and genuinely concerned to establish a climate of trust.

Zand (1972) found that trust was related to effective participation. Driscoll (1978) found that trust affects overall satisfaction among college faculty. Astuto and Clark (1985) found that in instructionally effective schools principals were active, supportive, and reliable; a low level of interaction was rare; and the interaction was of 'high quality'.

Falcione (1973, 1974b) found a positive relationship between source credibility and satisfaction. In addition, Falcione (1974b) found that participation in decision-making was related to satisfaction for subordinates. He suggested that perceived credibility may give 'quality' to the subordinates' participation.

Perceived source credibility has been operationally defined as the subjects score on the measure developed by Falcione, McCroskey, and Daly (1977), isolating five dimensions of credibility: "sociability" (S), "character" (CH), "competence" (COMPTNC) "composure" (COMPSR), and "extroversion" (EX). The measure was chosen because it defines a credible superior as one that constructs a 'safe' environment in which to work - that is reliable, supportive, genuinely concerned and involved with others, and morally ethical and fair.

Each dimension of the measure was found to be related to satisfaction with the immediate supervisor in a teacher sample (ibid) and to perceived conflict message strategies (Grafton & Wilcox, 1987). If the principal demonstrated PC the teachers were highly unlikely to use "nonconfrontation" cms and were likely to a moderately low extent to use "solution-orientation" cms. Teachers also tended not to use "control" cms. The measure is constructed as a semantic differential

scale with a range of seven and four items per factor. The reliability estimate for each factor was reported above .80 (ibid).

Management Communication Style (MCS)

Various leadership theorists have written on the importance of the management style of a group leader. Representative samples include the Managerial Grid (Blake & Mouton, 1964), the management style construct (Hersey & Blanchard, 1977), Argyris' maturity continuum (1957), and Likert's System 4 (1961). Pettegrew stated (1982), "All of the conceptualizations of management style hold in common the notion that organizational leadership exerts strong stylistic pressure on other members of the organization...Generally speaking [it is assumed] as task-oriented, or less humanistic productivity declines, employee morale suffers, communication becomes defensive, and the executive's corporate image is lessened. In essence, the entire domain of organizational communication is affected by management style" (p.181 - 182).

Research has not been equivocal in regards to the effectiveness of participative humanistic leadership styles (see for example, Locke, et al, 1977; Pettegrew, 1982). However, perceived participativeness is, generally, related to employee satisfaction (Locke, et al, 1977; Harrison, 1981; Driscoll, 1978; Wheeless, Wheeless, & Howard, 1983; Falcione, 1974b).

MCS is a measure of the perceived participativeness of the superior. The more participative the decision-making style of the superior, the more the subordinate should perceive their own influence. A positive relationship between MCS and employee satisfaction with the supervisor has been established (Richmond & McCroskey, 1979; Richmond, McCroskey, & Davis, 1982; Richmond, McCroskey, Davis, & Koontz, 1980). The relationship between the MCS and perceived conflict message

strategies teachers use was also established (Grafton & Wilcox, 1987): if the principal demonstated a "participative"[2] MCS the teachers were highly unlikely to use "nonconfrontation" cms but were were likely to use "solution-orientation" cms to a limited extent.

The MCS measure has been operationally defined as the subjects score on the measure developed by Richmond and McCroskey (1979). The measure is based on the work of Tannebaum and Schmidt (1958) and Sadler (1970). The measure is a 21-point continuum ranging from "Tell" (scored 10), to "Sell" (scored 16), to "Consult" (scored 23), to "Join" (scored 30). Test-retest reliability of the measure was .85. The internal reliability of the scale from the sum of scores from two administrations of the measure was estimated at .92 (ibid).

Team-Building (TB)

Team-building by the supervisors was found to be one of the most significant predictors of high participation groups (Harrison, 1985). Team-building was a significant predictor of the subordinates' perception of the supervisor's participativeness. Team-building was also positively related to perceived "solution-orientation" cms and negatively related to "nonconfrontation" cms (Grafton & Wilcox, 1987). In addition, a team-approach to problem-solving was positively related to teacher efficacy (Ashton & Webb, 1986).

The team-building measure was adapted by Harrison (1981) from Taylor and Bower's (1972) Survey of Organizations. It is a two-item measure of the degree to which subordinates perceive that a superior encourages open opinion exchange between subordinates and builds a foundation for teamwork. The reliability estimate reported by Harrison was coefficient alpha = .85.

Teacher Efficacy (TE)

Teacher efficacy is a measure of a teacher's perception that he/she positively affects students' learning and development. It is a measure of a teacher's 1) personal sense of responsibility and control over outcomes, or "personal efficacy" (PE) and 2) sense of control over environmental factors affecting outcomes, or "general efficacy" (GE) (Gibson & Dembo, 1984).

TE conceptually is related to a participative, problem-solving style. Based on Bandura's concept of self-efficacy (1977a, 1977b, 1982), teachers with a high level of efficacy are expected to 'approach' problem-solving situations actively and directly. Indeed, the research (Grafton & Wilcox, 1987) indicates that TE positively affects a teachers tendency to use "solution-orientation" cms, particularly female teachers. However, the act of participation may require more than efficacy. Duke, Showers, and Imbers (1981) found that while efficacy is positively associated with participation in decision-making, the relationship appears to be strengthened by the degree of influence a teacher perceives he/she can exert in a situation. Therefore, it can be hypothesized that TE affects the conflict strategies teachers choose to employ depending on their perception of the principal.

The Teacher Efficacy Scale developed by Gibson and Dembo (1984) was used in this study. Teacher efficacy was operationally defined as the subjects total score on the respective factors - "personal efficacy" and "general efficacy[3]." The two-dimensional measure consisted of 16 Likert scale variables. Internal consistency reliabilities yielded Cronbach alpha coefficients of .78 for PE, .75 for GE, and .79 for the total 16 items (ibid).

Organizational Communication Conflict Message Strategies (cms)

Putnam and Wilson (1982) stated that "research on conflict management styles grew out of a general disillusionment with value-laden approaches to the study of conflict (p. 630). With the recognition that conflict could be constructive if managed effectively, researchers began developing conflict management schemes (for example, Blake & Mouton, 1964; Rahim & Bonoma, 1979) to promote the effective management of organizational conflict.

The Organizational Communication Conflict Instrument (OCCI) developed by Putnam and Wilson (1982) was used in this study. It was developed to correct the reliability and validity problems associated with the previous operational conceptions of organizational conflict management strategies. The OCCI rests on the following assumptions:

1) ...Conflict strategies represent the behavioral choices that people make rather than a person's characteristic style...
2) this scale focuses on a particular phase of conflict - disagreements...
3) the decision to use a particular conflict strategy is largely governed by situational rather than personality constraints (Putnam & Wilson, 1982, p. 633).

The OCCI is a 34-item instrument. This Likert scale ranges from 1 to 7. The measure contains three factors: 1) "nonconfrontation" [N] - "avoidance and smoothing as indirect strategies for dealing with conflict", 2) "solution-orientation" [SO] - "direct confrontation, open discussion of alternatives, and acceptances of compromises", and "control" [C] - "direct confrontation that leads to persistent and nonverbal forcing" (Putnam & Wilson, 1982, p. 638).

The OCCI instrument was chosen because it captures the "movement" of the teachers' perceived 'approach' behavior - SO, 'avoidance' behavior - N, and 'against' behavior - C. The operational definition of the respective factors was the teachers' total score on the items

associated with each factor. The reliability estimate resulted in a Cronbach's alpha of .93 for N, .88 for SO, and .82 for C (ibid).

Sample

The sample consisted of teachers from six public school systems from five different Ohio counties. District population - administrators, teachers, and students, were predominately, white (caucasian) and middle-class. The total sample size was 830. Three hundred and six completed surveys were returned, a response rate of 37%, with 97 male and 204 female respondents[4].

Data-Analysis

Canonical correlation was used to test the hypotheses as it assesses a linear combination of two sets of variables to establish the relationship between them (Tucker and Chase, 1980). This method yielded the most parsimonious description of the relationship between the factors without the loss of relevant information. Using the SAS CANCORR (1982) statistical package the CO, PC, MCS, and TB factor scores were each combined with the TE factor scores and, then, correlated with the OCCI factor scores. The factor scores were derived by summing the variable items on each factor. The resulting structure defined the canonical relationship between the factors. A .30 cut-off point was used to determine which factors defined the canonical structure as recommended by Tucker and Chase (1980).

The groups were also separated by sex and the analysis was rerun. The results were not substantially different from those obtained from the first analysis, therefore, the results were not reported.

A comparative analysis was conducted to assess the nature of the differences between the first (Grafton & Wilcox, 1987) and present study. This analysis consisted of comparing the canonical structures when the TE factors were included and excluded in the model. (See Table 2 for a

synthesis of the results used from the first study for this comparison).

Results

The results of the present study are summarized in Table 8. From the results we can see that on the first root TE and the perceptions of the principal are negatively related to the N factor and are positively related to the SO factor. The most important determinant of the two that defined the relationship with the OCCI factors was the perception of the principal. However, teacher efficacy defined the nature of the relationship to a moderate extent when combined with the PC, MCS, and TB factors and to a moderately weak extent when combined with the CO factor.

The results supported the hypothesized relationship. The perceptions of the principal combined with the level of efficacy of the teacher were related to conflict strategies teachers tend to use with the principals in the expected direction. A detailed interpretation of the table follows.

The test of the relationship between CO, PE, and GE with the OCCI factors resulted in two significant roots (Root 1: $Rc = .60$, $Rc^2 = .37$, $df = 9$, $p < .0001$; Root 2: $Rc = .16$, $Rc^2 = .03$, $df = 4$, $p < .05$). On the first root, N (-.69) was negatively related and SO (.59) was positively related to CO (.94), PE (.38), and GE (.33). This suggested that if the principal was seen as demonstrating a high degree of CO and the teachers have a moderately low level of PE and GE, then the teachers will not use N cms to a moderately high extent and will use SO cms to a moderate extent.

On the second root, N (.72) and SO (.80) were positively related to PE (.86) and GE (.43) and negatively related to CO (-.33). If the principal was seen as not demonstrating a moderately low level of CO and the teachers have a high level of PE plus a moderate level of GE, then the teachers will tend to use N cms to a moderately high extent

and SO cms to a high extent.

The test of the relationship between the PC factors, PE, and GE with the OCCI factors revealed two significant roots (Root 1: Rc = .52, Rc^2 = .27, df = 21, $p < .0001$; Root 2: Rc = .32, Rc^2 = .10, df = 12, $p < .0001$). On the first root, CH (.88), S (.80), COMPTNC (.63), COMPSR (.54), PE (.42), and GE (.41) were negatively related to N (-.67) and positively related to SO (.53). These findings indicated that if the principal demonstrated a high level of CH and S, a moderately high level of COMPTNC, and a moderate level of COMPSR and if the teachers possessed a moderate level of PE and GE, then the teachers will not tend to use N cms to a moderately high extent and will use SO cms to a moderate extent.

On the second root, EX (.37) and PE (.50) were positively related to SO (.81), N (.46), and C (.67) while COMPSR (-.55) was negatively related. If the principal demonstrated a moderately low level of EX, did not demonstrate a moderate level of COMPSR, and if the teacher had a moderate level of PE then the teachers used SO cms to a high extent, C cms to a moderately high extent, and N cms to a moderate extent.

The test of the relationship between MCS, PE, and GE with the OCCI factors resulted in two significant roots (Root 1: Rc = .41, Rc^2 = .17, df = 9, $p < .0001$; Root 2: Rc = .18, Rc^2 = .03, df = 4, $p < .05$). On the first root, MCS (.78), PE (.56), and GE (.51) were negatively related to N (-.65) and positively related to SO (.60). This suggested that if the principal tends to be perceived as participative and the teachers have a moderate degree of PE and GE, then the teachers do not tend to use N cms to a moderately high extent and do use SO cms to a moderately high extent.

On the second root, MCS (-.62) was negatively related to N (.70),

SO (.80), and C (.36) while PE (.76) was positively related. If the principal was not seen as possessing a participative MCS to a moderate extent and the teachers do perceive that they have a moderately high level of efficacy, then the teachers will tend to use N cms to a moderately high extent, SO cms to a high extent, and C cms to a moderately low extent.

The test of the relationship between TB, PE and GE with the OCCI factors was significant on one root ($Rc = .50$, $Rc^2 = .25$, $df = 9$, $p < .0001$). TB (.88), PE (.50), and GE (.40) were negatively related to N (-.57) and positively related to SO (.72). Interpreted, the findings suggested that if the principal was perceived to facilitate team-building to a high extent and if the teachers have a moderate level of PE and GE, then teachers will tend not to use N cms to a moderate extent and will use SO cms to a moderately high extent.

The results of the comparison of the canonical structures in the first (Grafton & Wilcox, 1987) and present study are summarized in Table 3. In study one, no relationship existed between PC or MCS with SO for female teachers, and only a weak relationship existed between CO and SO. In the present study, however, there was a moderate relationship between the CO, PC, MCS, and TB with SO when TE was included in the canonical structure. The table revealed that TE affected the female teachers tendency to use SO cms, confirming the second hypothesis. In addition, the relationship between the perceptions of the principal and the conflict message strategies was not substantially altered for the male teachers when TE was added to the model. Efficacy seemed to equalize the tendency for females to engage in SO cms when compared to males.

Discussion

The results indicated that both teacher efficacy and the perceptions of the principal affect perceived communication conflict

message strategies used by teachers when they disagree with the principal on task-related issues. Previous research (Grafton & Wilcox, 1987) revealed the apparent negative affect of a principal that was not perceived positively - but was instead seen as closed, enacting a 'telling' nonparticipative MCS, not facilitating a team-orientation among the staff, and not credible. Teachers will actively avoid this principal when problem-solutions are to be found - an activity which will not foster efficacy, but will rather lead to a teacher-principal relationship which does not promote 'shared understanding.'

The research cited above also revealed that while male teachers would enact SO behaviors with principals they perceive positively, female teachers would not - unless the principal was a team-builder. However, female teachers with high efficacy would use SO conflict strategies. The suggestion derived from the research that the level of TE may affect the relationship between the perceptions of the principal and conflict message strategies was supported in this study. The level of TE did intensify the relationship between the perceptions of the principal and the tendency to use SO conflict strategies for females.

Together, this research offers greater support for the need of school systems to be aware of the importance of the relationship between teacher problem-solving behaviors, teachers' perceptions of the principal, and teacher efficacy. Without structures to foster the teachers' positive perceptions of the principal, teachers will not actively engage in dialogue with the principal when they disagree. The research indicated if the principals are perceived negatively, then the teachers will tend to avoid the principal when they disagree. However, even if the principal is perceived positively, female teachers tend still to avoid active interaction unless they feel they are efficacious.

School policymakers and administrators need to provide structures that

will foster the efficacy level of teachers. One structure which may reciprocally affect efficacy is the teacher-principal relationship itself. It is the teacher-principal relationship that "sets the stage" for active, problem-solving to occur. Once these conditions are set the 'mutual understanding' gained from active, solution-oriented problem solving should result in decisions which address the concerns of the teachers. Theoretically, the intentions and actions of the teachers will become 'linked' through the enactment of the dialogue itself (Weick, 1976), fostering efficacy.

This study represents a point of departure from traditional research investigating teacher-principal relations. A description of the behaviors in which teachers and principals engage, in conjunction with the perceptual and situational factors that affect this relationship, enhances our understanding of its nature. Additional investigations into this area are needed to develop a theoretical base that can be used to recommend relational strategies and policies that can be implemented to improve the school climate and foster instructionally effective schools.

This study does not begin to answer many questions. Rather, it raises many which may be the focus of future research. For example, while the perceptions of teachers are important in defining the 'quality' of the teacher-principal relationship, what differences might be found if the 'actual' behaviors are observed? How do the perceptions of the principal (i.e. desire to participate) affect his/her perceptions of the teachers that use solution-oriented strategies? Do enacted problem-solving strategies foster teacher efficacy over the long-term? And finally, what relationship do these factors have to the level of 'shared understanding' between teacher and principal?

Excellence in education requires more than well-trained teachers

teaching motivated students. It also requires a support system that will foster excellence and reduce the competing stress factors that inhibit teachers from feeling "in control." The principal serves as one key figure in that support system. A strong support system should facilitate innovative problem-solving which should both foster and reflect teacher efficacy. A weak support system may promote an isolationist approach to problem-solving which may reduce teacher efficacy as it increases perceptions of "powerlessness." Researchers in the field need to be attuned to the behaviors and attributes of both principals and teachers that affect the quality of the relationship between them. In so doing, recommendations may be suggested to foster perceptions of 'control' among the teaching staff and promote instructional "excellence."

FOOTNOTES

1. Garrett (1977) found that males were more likely than females to attribute teaching success to external factors and females were more likely to attribute teaching success to teacher controlled activity. A sense of "personal efficacy" was related to positive perceptions of the principal for female teachers (Grafton & Wilcox, 1987). The combination of positive perceptions and "personal efficacy" leads to 'approach' conflict message strategies for female teachers.

2. A participative principal may tend to use a 'consultive', or even a 'selling' style rather than a 'joining' style. Teachers did not tend to feel the principal used a 'joining' MCS to any great extent. The key distinction is that a participative principal does NOT use a 'telling' MCS, but rather engages the teacher in the decision-making process.

3. The term "general efficacy" was substituted in this study for "teaching efficacy" used by Gibson & Dembo (1984).

4. Five subjects did not complete the demographic information which explains the discrepancy between the total responses and the male/female figures.

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Table 1
THE CANONICAL STRUCTURES OF THE TE FACTORS AND CO, PC, MCS, AND TB FACTORS WITH THE OCCI FACTORS*

TE & CO X OCCI		TE & PC X OCCI		TE & MCS X OCCI		TE & TB X OCCI
Root 1	Root 2	Root 1	Root 2	Root 1	Root 2	
.94 CO	-.33 CO	.88 CH	.37 EX	.78 MCS	-.62 MCS	.88 TB
.38 PE	.86 PE	.80 S	-.55 COMPSR	.56 PE	.76 PE	.50 PE
.33 GE	.43 GE	.63 COMPTNC	.50 PE	.51 GE	--- GE	.40 GE
		.54 COMPSR	--- GE			
		.42 PE				
		.41 GE				
-.69 N	.72 N	-.67 N	.81 SO	-.65 N	.70 N	-.57 N
.59 SO	.80 SO	.53 SO	.46 N	.60 SO	.80 SO	.72 SO
--- C	--- C	--- C	.67 C	--- C	.36 C	--- C
$Rc = .60$, $Rc^2 = .37$, df = 9, $p < .0001$	$Rc = 16$, $Rc^2 = .03$, df = 4, $p < .05$	$Rc = .52$, $Rc^2 = .27$, df = 21, $p < .0001$	$Rc = .32$, $Rc^2 = 10$, df = 12, $p < .0001$	$Rc = .41$, $Rc^2 = .17$, df = 9, $p < .0001$	$Rc = .18$, $Rc^2 = .03$ df = 4, $p < .05$	$Rc = .50$, $Rc^2 = .25$, df = 9 $p < .0001$

* Only correlations of .30 or higher have been reported.

Table 2

THE STRENGTH OF THE CANONICAL FACTOR LOADINGS* REPRESENTING A TEACHER'S TENDENCY TO USE CONFLICT MESSAGE STRATEGIES GIVEN THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF THE PRINCIPAL: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Conflict Message Strategies	Perceptions of the Principal							
	Study 1: Canonical Structure Without TE (Grafton & Wilcox, 1987)							
	CO		PC		MCS		TB	
	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males
N	Strong	Mod	Mod High	Mod High	Strong	Mod	Mod	Mod
SO	Weak	Mod High	——	Mod	——	Strong	Mod	Mod High
	Study 2: Canonical Structure With TE: Root One+ (present analysis)							
	CO		PC		MCS		TB	
N	Mod		Mod		Mod		Mod	
SO	Mod		Mod		Mod		Mod High	

*Factor loadings of .80 and above = strong
.65 to .79 = moderately high
.40 to .64 = moderate
.30 to .39 = weak
Below .30 not reported

+No significant differences were found between males and females